

REMARKS

Claims 1-9 remain pending in the application. No claims have been amended by this response. Claims 3-5 have been withdrawn. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejections in view of the remarks contained herein.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1, 2 and 6-8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Jacob, U.S. 6,241,617. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

In this rejection, the Examiner equates the tapered section of the first section in Jacob's FIG. 1 to Applicants' "weakened area" of independent claims 1 and 7. Applicants disagree. Jacob is totally silent as to "weakening" as claimed. A similar geometry does not necessarily have physical properties identical to those taught and claimed by Applicants. Jacob does not teach a weakened area by simply pictorially disclosing a tapered section which is nowhere further described in the Jacob reference.

Furthermore, even assuming arguendo that FIG. 1 shows a "weakened area" in FIG. 1 of Jacob, then both sections 9 and 10 of Jacob have such areas. See FIG. 1. Therefore, the Jacob arrangement would, under axial load, buckle at both sections. Under this condition, Jacob could not teach Applicants' "isolating the second section from effects of the axial load to enable the second section to remain substantially stationary under the axial load", as called for in independent claim 1. Likewise, Jacob could not teach that "the second section remains substantially stationary in any direction transverse to the longitudinal axis", as called for in independent claim 7.

Independent claims 1 and 7, and their respective dependent claims 2, 6 and 8 are believed to be in condition for allowance.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claim 9 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Jacob. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

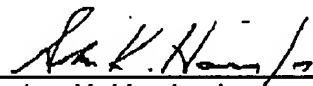
Without conceding the correctness of the Examiner's remarks thereover, claim 9 depends directly from claim 7 and is therefore believed to be in condition for allowance for the reasons set forth above with regard to claim 7.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action and the present application is in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested..

Respectfully submitted,

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